



REPORT

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• skeptic (n): a person who searches for truth through questioning and reasoning •

“A Mind for Murdergate” Revisited

Could there be a more innocent explanation than “Watergate-worthy doctoring” for the suspicious alterations in the second edition of “psychic” Noreen Renier’s memoir?

By Gary P. Posner

Our Fall 2008 issue led with my article, titled “A Mind for Murdergate,” summarizing a series of differences between the first and second editions of psychic detective Noreen Renier’s memoir, *A Mind for Murder*. I spotlighted the divergent accounts of the alphabetical clues that she had allegedly offered in a 1984 missing-airplane case, and contended that those alterations had been “so audacious as to defy any imaginable innocent explanation.”

Perhaps I suffer from a lack of imagination. I knew that there was no point in contacting Renier for comment — our relationship is not exactly cordial, and she admittedly retains little to no knowledge of what she says in her trances, and depends upon later word from her clients as to whether or not she had been helpful. But while conducting my side-by-side comparison of the two books, specifically with regard to this remarkable case — vouched for by (among others) an FBI agent — I hadn’t thought to dig out of my archives the 22-year-old testimony of Jessica Herbert, ex-wife of the agent, sister of one of the plane’s occupants, and the woman for whom Renier had provided the psychic reading. I had last perused that document in 1991 while preparing the manuscript for my chapter about Renier in *Psychic Sleuths*, which saw publication by Prometheus Books three years later.

To reset the stage, the crash site was found, after nearly two weeks, less than a mile southwest of Gardner Municipal Airport, which straddles the border between Gardner and Templeton, Massachusetts. In the second edition of her book, Renier says that she had provided Herbert with the clues “G, T and O” and had told her that

“they could be initials of towns [near] the location of the missing airplane.” The “G” and “T” were certainly dead-on, and if they were indeed the actual letters provided, that would seem eerily suggestive of possible psychic intuition — were it not for the fact that Herbert had informed Renier the day before the reading (and the local media had been reporting) that two witnesses at that airport had seen a small plane, still missing, go down at that precise location on the night in question.

The “Watergate-worthy doctoring” analogy arose because, in her memoir’s *first* edition, while reciting the letters corresponding to the cities, Renier had represented them as “H, D and A”! Thus, it seemed logical to conclude that she had decided to reinvent them when she repackaged the book, to better comport with where the plane was found. But could this have been merely an innocent correction of a colossal blunder in the original?

Upon recently rereading Jessica Herbert’s sworn deposition in the 1986 libel action brought by Renier against skeptic John Merrell (in which she prevailed), Herbert does not specify the letters per se, but does say that they did turn out to pinpoint “right where the plane [went] down, it was right where the actual town lines crossed ... Gardner and Templeton and I forget the name of the third town, but the three of them where they meet, where the town lines are together.” I’ve scrutinized several maps until my eyes have crossed and cannot for the life of me find the “O” town, but Renier’s book says that the “O” represents “the name of the river that runs right next to the crash site.” There is an Otter River on the opposite side of the airport, but the body of water right next to the crash site is named Templeton Creek.

In any event, getting back to my possible mea culpa, could there indeed be a more innocent, non-Nixonian, explanation for what I had concluded to be “Watergate-worthy doctoring”? Well, to paraphrase another impeached ex-president, that depends upon what the meaning of the word “innocent” is. If changing “H, D and A” to “G, T and O” was an “innocent” repair, the original error was of such magnitude as to constitute near-sabotage of one of the most compelling stories that

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TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS Statement of Purpose and "\$1,000 Challenge"

Tampa Bay Skeptics, Inc., a Special Interest Group of the Center For Inquiry/Tampa, is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization devoted to the critical examination of paranormal and fringe-science claims. TBS does not reject claims on *a priori* grounds, but rather is committed to objective and critical inquiry.

TBS's "\$1,000 Challenge" is open to anyone claiming verifiable scientific proof of the reality of ESP, UFOs, dowsing, astrology, or any paranormal phenomenon. Please contact us for details.

Tampa Bay Skeptics Report is published quarterly. We welcome news clippings, and articles and letters for publication (subject to editing for length, clarity, and taste), and solicit opposing points of view.

Views expressed in articles and letters are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of Tampa Bay Skeptics or Center For Inquiry/Tampa.

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Chairman's

Corner

Ida, or *Darwinius masillae*: The "Missing Link"?

To much fanfare and media hype, paleontologists recently revealed the discovery of a primate fossil dated at 47 million years, a small lemur-like animal preserved in stone in amazingly intricate detail. It is the oldest primate fossil discovered to date. Good enough, and certainly worth some publicity, but the media circus surrounding the news release reveals the abysmal and widespread ignorance surrounding evolution in general.

Discovered in a shale quarry in Germany in 1983 by amateurs, it was not until 2006, when professional paleontologists encountered the fossil at a "Fossil and Mineral Fair" and studied it, that the specimen was appreciated to be from the Middle Eocene Period, when most modern mammal families first appear in the fossil record, and represented a very early primate species.

The scientists contend that an analysis of the fossil indicates that the primate, dubbed "Ida," predates the branching off of modern anthropoids (monkeys, apes, humans) from prosimian (lemurs, tarsiers) lineages. Ida thus represents yet another "transitional species" in the long evolutionary chain, putting the lie yet again to the tired old creationist claim that there are no transitional fossils.

But before these findings could be revealed to the public, an entire public relations campaign was built up around the scientific discovery. The History Channel (home to such scientific gems as *Monster Quest* and *UFO Hunters*) and the BBC, together with a documentary production company and a book deal, packaged the coming-out party for maximum impact on viewership and sales.

Before other paleontologists could study the evidence or the

scientific conclusions reached, Ida was already being proclaimed as the "Eighth Wonder of the World," the "Lost Ark for archeologists," and the "Holy Grail." The media reported that Ida "finally confirms Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution," and represents "the missing link in human evolution." ABC News reported that Ida was "the oldest fossil ever discovered."

Do we need any better evidence that scientific illiteracy is rampant in our major news outlets? "The oldest fossil"? You mean older than the 3.4-billion-year-old stromatolite fossils from Australia, or the millions of fossils discovered from the Pre-Cambrian and Cambrian Eras? "The ancestor to all humans"? You mean that many of those earlier fossils, including the earliest fishes and earliest rodent-like mammals, aren't also "the ancestor" to all humans? Why not call an amoeba or paramecium "the ancestor" to all humans?

The entire concept of a "missing link" dates from the late 19th century, when it was believed that a simple tree of life led to the evolution of humans and that a single fossil discovery might provide the one link connecting humans to their primate ancestors. There are no "missing links" as such. Every discovery of a fossil, properly dated and studied, links us to our past. Primate evolution is complicated, with multiple lineages, and stops and starts, but all primate fossil discoveries have confirmed an evolutionary pathway to modern primates, including humans. Picking any one primate fossil and claiming that it is "the missing link" is simply wrong-headed.

And no single fossil "finally confirms Charles Darwin's Theory of

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Another View of Skepticism

By James W. Moseley

[This is the second column (the first was Summer 2007) in a possible continuing series by James Moseley, publisher since 1954 of the gossip and humorous Saucer Smear newsletter (originally named Saucer News) and coauthor of Shockingly Close to the Truth: Confessions of a Grave-Robbing Ufologist (Prometheus Books, 2002). He can be reached at P.O. Box 1709, Key West, Florida 33041.]

I had known the late Dominick (Dom) Lucchesi for years. Among his other traits was the ability and desire to be a hoaxer. We did ESP experiments together many times over a period of years, and I caught him cheating at least once. He was seeing the suit and numbers of the cards reflected on my glasses, so I stopped wearing glasses and started holding the deck such that he would have to see through the table in order to see the back of the cards. Suddenly his scores dropped dramatically, but he was *still* consistently way above "chance." I did not even bother to write down his scores, however, as I figured he was probably still cheating in some new way.

Finally came the evening when Dom seemed interested in trying again. First he got several (at least two or three or more) sets of four-digit numbers correct after I wrote them down on paper, holding my other hand so that he could not see what I was writing or even the motion of my hand. I then pointed out to him that he might still be cheating somehow, to which he replied that he would read four-digit numbers *out of my head!* He did this successfully at least two or three times. Then he started to get the four-digit numbers right but in the wrong order, for instance, "1243" or "4321" instead of "1234." This is not nearly as hard to do, but it is still extremely interesting. He then lost the power completely.

I am not surprised that we both decided to drop the matter at that, but *you* may wonder why, after succeeding in convincing *me*, Dom didn't run out to convince the *world* of his powers. There was no million-dollar offer in those days, and Dom's powers were intermittent and unpredictable. *If* such psychic skill could be translated into an ability to, for example, win consistently at gambling (which I am not sure is possible), then such a person could amass much greater riches by going anonymously to various casinos and winning big. I think

the reason you skeptics are so emotionally opposed to the psychic realm is that you believe (and Gary Posner said something like this to me on the phone when we were first discussing all this) that this would upset all the laws of science and cause great upheaval. *Why?* The walls of MIT would not crumble. It would merely open the door to a new avenue of inquiry.

Now for a story I find even more exciting than the episode with Dom. I used to play my own version of "ESP" with cards, going through the deck several times in a row, trying to guess the top card without looking at it. Almost always I did poorly at first, then increasingly better, then worse again, as I warmed to the game and then tired of it after several runs. One day I picked up the deck and got the first few cards completely wrong (as usual), and then a distinct feeling (not a voice) came over me, and I said to myself in my mind, "Why am I wasting my time guessing at these cards when I could just as well know exactly what they are?" I then continued the game and got approximately four out of six (it might have been five out of 7) perfectly right. The mathematical odds are not as dramatic as with the four-digit numbers, but still very impressive, and at that point, somewhat unnerved, I again said to myself in my mind, "I am dealing here with something I don't understand." That seemed to break the spell (or whatever), and the power disappeared forever. But for that very brief period of time — a matter of perhaps one minute — I had been able to *see* the cards in my mind! I think this must be related to what people call the "third eye." I didn't go for any million-dollar prize because this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I would be too intimidated to even try to do it again in front of the Amazing Randi.

How do these things happen? I suspect the opinion of most readers of this newsletter is that they simply *don't*, due to a simplistic notion that if one has ESP, it must be provable at any hour of the day or night. My experience is that ESP is extremely fragile and unpredictable. There might be drugs or other methods of making it work on a more dependable basis, but there is no documentation of this.

Another thing Posner said to me on the phone was something like, "You should be ashamed to say you can see cards in your mind. People will think you are crazy."

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Snippets

"Area 51," the secret military installation situated in the Nevada desert, cut its teeth in the late 1950s as the testing grounds for the CIA's U-2 spy plane. Now, a half-century later and for the first time, five men have come forward to reveal what they can about their years of intimate involvement in the area's secret projects. One such alleged activity was the reverse engineering of UFOs. But according to Thornton "T.D." Barnes, formerly a special-projects engineer at the facility, "We did reverse engineer a lot of foreign technology, including the Soviet MiG fighter jet," but no UFOs. However, the top-secret A-12 OXCART spy plane, with its wide, disc-like fuselage, could have easily been mistaken for an alien craft during its 2,850 test flights out of "Area 51." Noted Colonel Hugh "Slip" Slater, commander of the "Area 51" base in the 1960s, "That's a lot of UFO sightings!" The CIA declassified information about the A-12 OXCART program in 2007.

(Los Angeles Times Magazine via the Internet, April)

"Area 52" may become the designation of the area of the brain involved in the military's effort to develop "user-to-user communication on the battlefield without the use of vocalized speech through analysis of neural signals." The Pentagon's "mad-science" Darpa division has been allocated \$4-million of your hard-earned money to start its Silent Talk program this year. This is on the heels of last year's \$4-million Army outlay to the University of California to investigate the potential for computer-mediated telepathy. Also on the military's agenda is devising "mind-reading binoculars that alert soldiers to threats faster than the conscious mind can process them." But that's all small potatoes compared to this: Last year, the National Research Council and Defense Intelligence Agency released a report suggesting that such mind-to-mind research may yield the ability not merely to communicate but to actually "make the enemy obey our commands."

(Wired.com, May 14)

"Area 53" may be the part of the body that benefits from taking vitamin and mineral supplements to ward off cancer, stroke or heart attacks. Two long-term trials sponsored by NIH, costing hundreds of millions of dollars and involving more than 50,000 participants, have failed to locate any such area in the body. Professor Edgar Miller of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine says, "These things are ineffective, and in high doses they can cause harm. ... [Many] people are stressed out and think [vitamins] will help. It's just wishful thinking."

(Los Angeles Times via St. Pete. Times, Dec. 22)

Remember when all it took to relieve pain, enhance circulation, stabilize energy flow and reduce stress was to wear a copper bracelet? Well, that's so Bronze Age! Titanium-laced necklaces and wristbands are now where it's at! Just ask New York Yankees pitcher Joba Chamberlain, Boston Red Sox stars Josh Beckett and Dustin Pedroia, or maybe 12-year-old Shane Scully of Tampa. They all swear by these miraculous accouterments, whose "energy transport system [increases] the efficiency of each and every single cell" of the body, according to the website of their Japanese manufacturer Phiten. But according to Jeff Konin, executive director of USF's Sports Medicine and Athletic Related Trauma Institute, "There are no studies that have looked at whether or not wearing one of these necklaces or bands has any impact on one's body. ... I think it's all mental. Once you put it on you think that it helps." The necklaces cost a mere \$47, and the bracelets are a steal at \$15, so why not give them a try? Maybe they work on the body's "Area 54."

(St. Pete. Times, April 7)



And from our "Where Are They Now?" Dept.: Miss Cleo, star of the Psychic Readers Network (PRN) TV infomercials earlier this decade, has relocated to Lake Worth, calling herself not a "psychic" but a "voodoo priestess" and giving readings at \$75 to \$250 a pop. She has also provided the voice of a gang leader in the *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* video game, and has come out as a lesbian and become a gay rights activist. As we reported in 2002, originally billed as a shaman from Jamaica, Cleo turned out to be Youree Dell Harris from Los Angeles and was declared "a fraud" by Florida Assistant Attorney General Dave Aronberg. PRN, which was based in Fort Lauderdale, was shut down by the FTC following a deluge of consumer complaints.

(Miami Herald, March 24)

"Snippets" are derived from the referenced sources and then rewritten by TBS Report's editor.

“A Mind for Murdergate’ Revisited” (*from page 1*)

any psychic detective has ever told. The only reason that her memoir even had a second life, which granted her the chance to make the “innocent” alteration, was the fact that her original publisher was obliged to pull the book because two chapters had violated a 1992 Settlement Agreement constraining Renier and Merrell from ever again trashing the other in print. If “H, D and A” was merely an egregious boo-boo on Renier’s part, it seems to be illustrative of blithe negligence on a par with her decision to ignore, and to not even inform her publisher of, her binding contract with Merrell.

My 2008 article also included the famous line from Nixon’s interview with David Frost, in which Nixon was cajoled into acknowledging that “I gave [my critics] a sword, and they stuck it in and they twisted it with relish.” And I ended the piece by suggesting that Renier, by virtue of having so grossly altered those letters in her revised book, should resign herself to the fact that “she has handed the world a sword, and that her credibility has now been unequivocally and forevermore impeached.” But even if we now grant her the benefit of the doubt that altering the letters was a bona fide correction of an irresponsibly errant passage, do we have reason to trust, in the absence of incontrovertible proof, the accuracy of *anything else* she claims to have successfully divined by virtue of psychic powers?

If the revised version of the story is the more accurate accounting, then she actually handed us the sword *even earlier* — upon publication of the book’s *first* edition. Either way, her credibility, for reasons certainly not limited to this case, remains suspect.

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“Another View of Skepticism” (*from page 3*)

Well, Posner should be ashamed to make such an outrageous statement, and to recommend self-censorship when he claims to believe in “freedom of speech.” I have told that card story in several lectures and interviews, and I don’t think it has made people think I was any crazier than they thought before! If people were “ashamed” to tell of paranormal events, UFO sightings, and other unacceptable things, these mysteries would not be solved for a very long time indeed, if ever.

I am not saying I have all the answers. But you skeptics (if Posner is representative) seem to think that *you* do, and are too rigid to even *consider* such heresy. Obviously, the easiest explanation for a skeptic to believe is that I am lying or deliberately grossly exaggerating. I do have a track record in ufology of a few hoaxes — or it

would be no fun at all — though I always confessed eventually. But the psychic adventures I have described herein are faithful renditions of my best memory of the events in question. Obviously, as the late Robert Ripley used to say, you can believe it or not.

Gary Posner responds: Jim Moseley has been corresponding with me by mail, and phoning me every other month or so, for years. He has published many of my “Letters to the Editor” in his newsletter, and we have published his occasional submissions. Despite our fundamentally different worldviews, we have gotten along very amicably. But as I have half-jokingly written to him in a recent letter, I now suspect that his real motive all along has been to entrap me into dispensing a piece of free psychiatric advice that he could find disagreeable enough to plaster me for in print.

I’m pretty certain I said “embarrassed” rather than “ashamed,” but my point was that if one doesn’t wish to be perceived as a kook, one ought not to go around boasting of the ability to identify playing cards that are face down. I would have never said such a thing in public or in print — it was personal, confidential advice rendered during an unsolicited telephone call. And its context was educational rather than ad hominem. I informed him (again) that although the scientific community has yet to accept psychic abilities as genuine, the psychological literature is replete with such accounts and their likely explanations. Nor, of course, did I suggest that his right to “freedom of speech” be abrogated — nor should mine be.

It strikes me as naive for Moseley to endorse an individual who at times has shown himself to be “a hoaxer.” Uri Geller is another case in point, and another person whom Moseley believes sometimes performs genuine paranormal feats despite faking others. TBS’s interest is in scientifically testing such alleged abilities, and leaving religious-like “belief” to others. Moseley would counter that his belief is not “religious-like” in that he has seen psychic manifestations with his own eyes (but haven’t many believers “seen” Jesus and other miracles?), and that such abilities are too “intermittent and unpredictable” for testing (though predictable enough that Moseley has managed to witness several instances).

One need not succeed every time when scientifically tested — TBS has been willing to retest people who have failed our “\$1,000 Challenge.” And as I have explained to Moseley during many of our conversations, we skeptics are not “emotionally opposed to the psychic realm” — we are scientifically skeptical of its existence. Yet we are willing to pay big bucks for valid scientific evidence that we are wrong.

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TBS T-shirts (S, M, L, XXL and XXXL) are available from the CFI/Tampa office. 100% cotton, black, crew style, no pocket, with TBS name/logo in white across the chest.

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www.randi.org

And check out the TBS website's
full page of "Resource Links"

JREF's Annual Pigasus Awards

*The following is excerpted/edited
from the James Randi Educational
Foundation website (www.randi.org):*

The Pigasus Award is the name of an annual tongue-in-cheek honor recognized by noted skeptic James Randi, who usually announces the awards from the previous year on April 1. They are announced via telepathy, winners are allowed to predict their victories, and the Flying Pig trophies are sent via psychokinesis. The logo of a winged pig was designed for Randi's website by German artist Jutta Degener in 1996. The name "Pigasus" was chosen by Randi from suggestions e-mailed to him. The term is a portmanteau pun combining the word pig with the mythological Pegasus, a reference to the expression "when pigs fly."

The winners for 2008:

Category #1: To the scientist or academic who said or did the silliest thing related to the supernatural, paranormal or occult: Dr. Colin Ross, a psychiatrist in Texas who claims that he can send electromagnetic beams out of his eyes and has rigged up a system to detect them. He applied for our Million Dollar Challenge, but our experts say Dr. Ross' eye movements are what trigger his system.

Category #2: To the funding organization that supported the most useless study of a supernatural, paranormal or occult claim: The producers of *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (Logan Craft, Walter Ruloff, and John Sullivan). Hosted by Ben Stein, the movie was an atrocious web of distortions, ridiculous accusations, bad logic, and out-and-out falsehoods. They interviewed several notable academicians so that they could get quotations, and

used them out of context. Roger Ebert penned a tour-de-force evisceration of the movie for his *Chicago Sun-Times* column, a must-read that slam-dunks *Expelled* into the dustbin of Hollywood.

Category #3: To the media outlet that reported as factual the most outrageous supernatural, paranormal or occult claims: The makers of Enzyte, the "male enhancement" supplement shilled by Berkeley Premium Nutraceuticals. The "Smiling Bob" Enzyte commercials are still running (especially, it seems, on Comedy Central) despite the company's CEO and founder, Steve Warshak, and his mother, Harriet Warsjhak, having been found guilty in September 2008 of conspiracy to commit all kinds of fraud. They were thrown in jail and had to forfeit half a billion dollars. [Note: *We at TBS Report don't quite understand this award, since the makers of Enzyte are not a "media outlet."*]

Category #4: To the performer who fooled the greatest number of people using the least talent: Jenny McCarthy, the well-known model and actor, who in recent days is getting far more publicity for her stance that vaccines cause autism.

Category #5: Most persistent refusal to face reality: Kevin Trudeau, who hit the airwaves in the 1990s shilling his book *Natural Cures "They" Don't Want You to Know About*, where he claimed eating coral calcium cures cancer. In 1998 a court ordered him not to make this false claim, and in 2003 the Federal Trade Commission charged that he knowingly violated the 1998 order. He was charged once again in 2008 for false claims, this time about his book *The Weight Loss Cure "They" Don't Want You to Know About*. And he has spent two years in federal prison for credit card fraud.

Letters • Readers' Forum

Editor: My name is Allen. I am from Leesville, South Carolina. I am a sensitive/empath and would like to have a chance to prove there is life after death. Please let me know what you think about the attached evidence and what I would have to do to take your "\$1,000 Challenge." I really don't care about the money, I just want to get my things out there to let the world know we are not alone.

Please go to www.iamhaunted.weebly.com and click the "Evidence" tab for more of my things. I have not faked or edited anything in any way — when you have a gift like mine you don't have to. If you think they can be explained, then I want to see you or anyone else reproduce anything I have.

Allen Westmoreland
hauntedn2008@live.com

TBS photoanalyst Guss Wilder responds:

With regards to the image he sent with the overturned flowers in the cemetery, the person in the background appears to be holding a flashlight, which would account for both the orange glow on the ground and the wavy blur of orange light. EXIF information on the file tells us that the exposure was made at 1/2 second of shutter time. During that time, the person's hand was in motion, accounting for the wavy blur of the flashlight lamp. The hand itself was lit primarily by the camera flash (about 1/1000 of a second), so it appears frozen, rather than blurred.

With regards to the cemetery image containing numerous "orbs," that orb optical effect occurs when fine dust particles are near the lens and the on-camera flash is also very near the lens. Do a Google search on "orbs explained" for a more detailed explanation and examples. Towards the center of the picture, one of the orbs overlaps what I am guessing is a reflection from trash on the ground. Funeral flowers often have foil wraps on their pots, so a lot of this reflective material might be around a cemetery.

I only took a quick glance at his web site, but nothing out of the ordinary caught my attention.

Editor: I recently became aware of the Paranormal Challenge you and your organization have set up to prove the existence of the paranormal and supernatural. I am very interested in proving with you the existence of such, and have for the last three years studied my own paranormal abilities. I am only 27, a graduate from Pennsylvania State University and a well-educated, quite normal woman who has had (what seems like) extensive experiences with the paranormal and supernatural. I haven't yet deepened my study of what I have experienced, both because I am not sure where to turn to prove such things and because my experience is still new.

I know I can prove time-space dimension change and mentalist ability with an ability to control music/TV. All I need to do so is 1-5 people, a TV, and your organization. Thank you for your time and hopeful acceptance of my application!

Darlene Ann Sterner
deesterner@hotmail.com

During our e-mail exchanges, Sterner claimed that she could make someone on live TV say anything we wanted, so we mutually agreed that she would have someone say "The Bermuda Triangle eats monsters and dairy cows" on PBS's NewsHour with Jim Lehrer on Friday, April 17. Although nothing of the sort happened during the program, Sterner wrote back later that evening, "I felt it went really well. I could definitely tell that they were picking up my mental messages and saw their lips moving to what I was saying. I got the female announcer to understand, I believe, what we were asking and why. I am positive she got my mental telepathy, and the messages I was sending her. What did you see? Were you convinced? Did you see her talking about me, what we asked?" In my response to the contrary, I opined that she is suffering from a delusional disorder and urged her to seek help. —G.P.

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Last Saturday of every March, June, September,
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Our next meeting will be:

SATURDAY, JUNE 27

11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

TBS HOME OFFICE (AT CFI/TAMPA)

BRIDGEPORT CENTER BUILDING

5201 W. KENNEDY BLVD., SUITE 124, TAMPA

(Next building westward from West Shore Plaza)

**Featured: *An Evening with James Randi* (1-hr.
video hosted by Michael Shermer), Bill Hall on
"How I Became a Skeptic," and other fun stuff**

Press and
Public
Welcome

Visit TBS's Website

www.tampabayskeptics.org

If for no other reasons, check out the web versions of our *TBS Report* articles for their related links and for the occasional graphics not present in our printed newsletters due to space constraints.

And send us your **e-mail address** if you would like to be added to our **TBS Update Service**.

TBS and James Randi "Psychic" Challenges

Tampa Bay Skeptics has a standing "\$1,000 Challenge" for scientific proof of any paranormal phenomenon.

The James Randi Educational Foundation will award its fully secured \$1,000,000 jackpot to the first person able to successfully demonstrate paranormal power for Randi.

These monetary rewards, and a place in history, await the first successful candidates. All UFOlogists, psychics, astrologers, dowsers, and the like are encouraged to come forward and offer your proof. See the "\$\$\$ Challenges" page on the TBS website or contact us for more details.

"Chairman's Corner" (from p. 2)

Evolution." Evolution through natural selection is confirmed every time a fossil is uncovered evidencing divergence and adaptation in the proper geologic time frame, every time molecular DNA studies demonstrate ancestral evolutionary paths, and every time biogeography validates the colonization and radiation of species on isolated islands. Despite the claim by supernaturalists that there is some controversy surrounding it, the theory of evolution is among the most thoroughly validated scientific theories of all time. No single fossil, however amazing it may be, can claim such a privilege.

When lawmakers go through their yearly exercise of looking for ways to downplay evolution and promote religion in our schools, is it any wonder that when the next generation of schoolchildren grows up, they too will fall into some of these same fallacies?

Center For Inquiry / Tampa

As the opening paragraph of its website explains, Center for Inquiry/Tampa (of which Tampa Bay Skeptics is a Special Interest Group) offers an opportunity to put your principles into practice by joining other rationalists in working for positive change in society. CFI/Tampa sponsors social events for freethinkers as well as intellectual programming, and assists with campus outreach.

One ongoing event, the lecture series on the third Saturday of each month at 11:00 a.m., often covers topics that may be of particular interest to TBS members.

For more information on upcoming CFI/Tampa events, visit their website (www.CenterForInquiry.net/Tampa) or contact them by mail (5201 W. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 124, Tampa, FL 33609), e-mail (Tampa@CenterForInquiry.net), phone (813-849-7571), or fax (813-849-7572).



c/o Center For Inquiry / Tampa
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A Special Interest Group of the



FIRST CLASS